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JEWISH MEDICINE¹

WE have here 112 small octavo pages chock full of interesting and—even when erroneous—instructive comment, upon the health legislation of the Pentateuch. The author bases himself upon translation—the Revised Version—and excludes from his purview all questions of higher criticism. The work is written from the viewpoint of modern science—especially that of the Military Health Officer. The angle of approach, however, is somewhat unusual, and this, as well as the author's general attitude, can perhaps best be shown by quotation from the preface:

‘This book is a product of the Great War. It had its origin in a broken-down village in Macedonia, when having to give a lecture on sanitation to the officers of his battalion, the author chanced to think of the plague of flies . . . recorded in . . . Exodus ; and as he read through the whole series of plagues with his mind fixed on the subject of his lecture, a new meaning seemed to light up these events. . . . The seed thus planted went on growing . . . in many bivouacs and villages . . . ripening to maturity in various camps in France. Again, but for the War the author could not have gained an insight into the problems and difficulties which have beset every army in the field, from the six hundred thousand footmen who followed Moses out of Egypt down to the expeditionary forces of the last few years. . . . Many readers will perhaps miss the word “taboo”. . . . It has been purposely omitted. . . . It would be futile to deny the cultus of taboo among many primitive tribes, and . . . to suppose that the primitive Israelites were entirely free from it. But the various “prohibitions” referred to in this book have not been set down to . . . taboo. . . . It has seemed preferable to say that Moses taught and prohibited by way of appeal to religious feelings. . . . No claim is made to originality in the assertion that Moses was the founder of Preventive Medicine. All that is new is the method of displaying wares

¹ *Biblical Studies. Moses, the Founder of Preventive Medicine.* By PERCIVAL WOOD, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., Capt. R.A.M.C. London: SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. New York: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, 1920. pp. xi + 116.

that are as old as the hills, in comparison with modern experience. . . . There is no intention of denying the divine purpose that is stamped upon every line of the history of these old Israelites, . . . there is only an added interest in demonstrating how natural were the agencies through which that purpose was wrought. There is nothing to lose, but much to gain in every shred of evidence . . . to prove that this is not merely a story written for our learning, but that it tells of living realities, of men of flesh and blood who underwent the same hardships and faced the same problems that confront us to-day (and have especially confronted us during the last five years), and who in so large a measure anticipated our own modern attempts to find their solution.'

After a general 'Introductory' upon the principles and methods of sanitary science, the author discusses the plagues of Egypt. He finds a serial connexion among them, and points out how contamination of water and food, destruction of food supplies, spread of infection by flies and vermin, and similar calamities, can break down national health and spirit, and in the end destroy national power. While the discussion is in some respects more ingenious than convincing, the general lesson enforced—apart from its special application—is one of high importance; and the author is perhaps justified in finding some reminiscence of the events of Exodus, in the promise of Deuteronomy (7. 15) that obedience to the laws delivered by Moses will preserve Israel from 'the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest', and maintain him in possession of the promised land. Less likely to command assent is the further suggestion that 'this long run of tragedies would present to [the] trained mind [of Moses] a great picture of cause and effect' in relation to the dangers of 'bad sanitation', and 'that the many edicts on these subjects which he gave out later, drew their first inspiration from these impressive object-lessons'.

When Captain Wood proceeds to the detailed study of 'the edicts of Moses' he treads upon firmer ground. While the later development and expansion of Mosaic ordinances is conceded, and in some places the work of the Rabbis is alluded to, the author deems it simpler to consider the Pentateuchal health legislation only, and as a whole. He finds evidence that much of it originated in the necessities of a large body of people on the march or encamped;

the principles thus established being later taken over for the government of permanent settlements. If, however, he is right in his analysis of the plagues, the escape of the inhabitants of Goshen would indicate an earlier origin for many of the sanitary regulations, which would then have been carried over from Goshen to the wilderness.

It is interesting to note that this new experiment in what may be termed 'institutional exegesis' leads to one result quite parallel with those of Judge Sulzberger in detecting beneath an apparently common phrase the existence of an office with very special functions. The 'clean person' (*ish tahor*) is seen to be a 'sanitary inspector' (e.g. Num. 19) charged with definite and important duties under the priests, who are the 'medical officers of health'. To the reviewer this seems more than probable and a further confirmation—if any be needed—of the value of the method of Biblical study inaugurated in '*Am Ha-Aretz*'.

The chapters on the control of infectious diseases form indeed the most important section of the book. It is clearly shown that the Biblical legislation for this purpose is far in advance of anything systematically attempted in modern states until less than 100 years ago.

Stress is laid upon the provisions not only for the isolation and quarantine of those having communicable disease, but also for the detention and frequent inspection of suspected 'contacts' and for the disinfection of both the sick and the 'contacts' before they could again mingle freely with the mass of the people. The rigorous disinfection of contaminated materials, and their destruction by fire when cleansing was insufficient, is also emphasized.

There is likewise a good chapter on 'Legislation on Hygiene', that is, the preservation of health, as contrasted with the mere restriction of communicable disease. Three points are taken up. 'I. Preservation of water and food. II. Disposal of decomposable material, which means prevention of flies and of contamination of food. III. Personal hygiene.' As to the first of these, Moses could provide only against macroscopic contamination, and this meant principally 'by dead bodies, animal and human'. Particular

emphasis is laid upon the rule that contaminated earthenware vessels must be broken, and that if any drink be contained therein, it is unclean. In this connexion also the author stresses 'the law when a man dieth in a tent . . . every open vessel which hath no covering bound upon it is unclean'. Food and drink thus exposed would quickly be contaminated by flies. But prevention of flies is also attempted in the strict provisions for the disposal of all sorts of decomposable refuse, even that resulting from the sacrifices ; while the avoidance of latrines within the camp, the order for burying all excrement, and the covering with earth of the blood of slaughtered birds and animals, further provided against the multiplication of insect 'carriers' and against contamination of water supply.

The other subjects considered, including the cleanliness of person and habitation, the dietary laws, and the rite of circumcision (both of which last the author rates high as health measures) are studied with equal thoroughness.

Collating many scattered but related passages, and comparing the whole with modern sanitary regulations, the author reasonably infers that there are many gaps in our records. Extant data embody all the principles of sanitation known to modern science, 'soundly conceived and effectively applied'; but they also point to the existence of a more extensive code, 'both in the civil and military spheres, which had for its general object the preservation of the public health'. He concludes thus :

'Enough has been said to indicate that, scattered amongst the different sections of this code, there are many fragments which when gathered together point unmistakably to the existence of a fairly complete system of preventive medicine. It is indeed one of the most remarkable pieces of work ever accomplished, so remarkable that it is amazing, except for the reasons given in Chapter I,² that for thousands of years it should have been lost sight of. It was an anachronism and suffered the fate of anachronisms, for it was not understood. But we in these later days can better appraise the value of Moses' achievement. Having traced its genesis and development, it is possible for us to appreciate at their true worth the depth and breadth of the

² Being a separatist and religious ritual other nations refused to adopt it.

knowledge and the acuteness of the observation that could alone have produced such a result. It must have been uphill work for him all the way through, and, as has been shown before, there were failures at times. But his fundamental principles were so sound, as sound now as they were then, his laws so clear, his attention to detail so marked, and his spirit so undaunted to the end, that when there was failure, the blame should rather be laid at the door of the 'congregation'—surely the most unpromising material with which a zealous administrator ever had to deal. . . . The code of Hammurabi, about eight hundred years older than the Mosaic code, deals only with civil and criminal matters. There is no preventive medicine mentioned in it. Doubtless the Egyptians, for all their superstitions, had some rudiments of hygiene. Doubtless the diagnosis and treatment of disease and injury had been practised since the dawn of the human race, but preventive medicine, however unconsciously it was inaugurated, began with Moses.'

One cannot quarrel with the author's exaltation of Moses; but he underrates the 'congregation'. After all, no law, and especially no prohibitory law, can be enforced upon great bodies of men in defiance of public sentiment. Moses died after governing Israel but forty years—and Israel still lives, largely because of obedience to Mosaic law for nigh forty centuries. The laws of Moses and his predecessors, coadjutors and successors, in their sanitary as well as their moral and economic aspects, are thus additional evidence of the high state of intellectual civilization and spiritual development early attained by the nation whose constitution and statutes they became.

The table of Biblical passages referred to in the book and the comprehensive index materially enhance its value.

It is not a pleasant picture that Dr. Masterman³ draws of present sanitary—or rather insanitary—conditions in Palestine. The author points out that 'among the responsibilities which the new Government will have to undertake, none is more urgent

³ *Hygiene and Disease in Palestine in Modern and Biblical Times*. With two appendices. By E. W. G. MASTERMAN, M.D., F.R.C.S., D.P.H. With a Preface by ALEXANDER MACALISTER, M.D., F.R.S., Professor of Anatomy, University of Cambridge. London: PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND. pp. xviii + 70.

than improved sanitation'. Professor Macalister, too, says in his preface: 'That the Holy land is still, as it was in the Biblical period, a hot-bed of many diseases, which have lost none of their virulence during the post-Biblical centuries of misrule, is not a matter of surprise to any one who knows the almost total absence of respect for hygienic precautions all through the latter portion of its history. But there is no reason to doubt that, given the enactment and enforcement of modern hygienic regulations, it might become one of the healthiest countries in the Eastern Mediterranean area.'

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, on Diseases of Modern Palestine and Syria, contains chapters on Race, Habit, and Food as bearing on Disease; Climate and Water Supply; the Common Diseases of Palestine and Syria; Ideas among the Natives regarding Disease; Conditions of Life and Health in Early Times. Part II, on Diseases of the Bible, treats of Hygiene in the Old Testament; Disease and Medicine in the Old Testament; Disease and Medicine in the New Testament. Part III consists of two appendices, one upon the water supply of Jerusalem, and the other giving a list of British medical establishments in the Holy Land. There is also a good bibliography and a special index of Biblical references.

In the first part, the author points out that practically all tropical and sub-tropical diseases are rife in Palestine. Most of these are parasitic in origin, and malaria probably works the greatest ravages. It may be remarked, however, that the work of Gorgas at Panama has shown that malaria is readily brought under control by comparatively simple measures that need not here be particularized, but which must be enforced with iron discipline. One may hope that the health administration of Palestine will at first be entrusted to the Medical Corps of the British Army, and later to an efficient Health Department with ample powers.

Typhoid fever is always endemic in Palestine, and at times occurs in epidemics. It is particularly fatal to Europeans. Typhus, typhoid, influenza and dengue, occur in epidemics. Plague has not appeared in Palestine in epidemic form since the

first third of the nineteenth century. Tuberculosis is on the increase. Leprosy is not a common disease but it infects all classes. Skin diseases and diseases of the eye are common. Infestation with intestinal parasites is very frequent.

It is, however, unnecessary to cite in full the list of potential and existent ills recorded in the book, some more or less peculiar to the country, others found in all lands. It is sufficient to note that most of them are preventable by strict and intelligent sanitary discipline ; in other words by Mosaic methods.

Dr. Masterman's discussion of the diseases mentioned in the Bible is hampered by the lack of exact descriptions and definite equivalents for technical, or perhaps popular terms, that has been felt by all others dealing with the subject. One may, however, endorse the words of Professor Macalister : 'The short, popular, but comprehensive account of the Diseases of the Bible which we have here from the pen of Dr. Masterman (than whom no man knows the medical history of the country better) is a well-timed and most interesting contribution to knowledge, which will doubtless be read and valued by all who desire the latest and most trustworthy account of the identification of Palestinian Diseases'.

Less satisfactory is the chapter on 'Hygiene in the Old Testament'. The subject is dismissed in four pages, and its general tendency may perhaps be best characterized in the statement that Masterman and Wood see things exactly reversed. According to the former, the Mosaic hygienic code is largely a system of taboo, some of which has accidental sanitary value. The dietary laws, in especial, are a senseless conglomerate. Circumcision is barbarous and useless. Nevertheless, the author says : 'As a whole there can be no question but that these laws, by inculcating temperate and moral habits, by encouraging labor six days a week only, and by their great annual feasts which involved a thorough cleaning of the house, healthful pilgrimages and change of habit, did much to promote the vitality of the Hebrews. The survival and steady increase of this race, in spite of privations and persecutions and of continual loss by religious defection, is abundant proof that even the cumbersome legislation of Talmudic Judaism

is on the side of good health and long life. It is, however, the moral and religious teaching rather than the mere ritual laws that has made this people prosperous.'

The reviewer may add a word for himself, reiterating an oft-expressed conclusion. The hygienic legislation of Bible and Talmud most probably originated in what has been called by Captain Wood 'the religious motive', the essence of which was, and is, the preservation of 'holiness'; the essentials thereof being—and remaining—cleanliness, cleanliness, and cleanliness. The health-preserving value of cleanliness must soon have become evident, and its ritual was doubtless extended with deliberate sanitary motive. The requirement that every soldier should carry as part of his armament, a 'paddle', is not taboo. The destruction, or removal beyond the camp, of infected and decomposable materials, is not taboo. And if other regulations originated as taboos, it is at least to be remarked that on the whole, only such as experience has shown to be of distinct health value have been preserved and elaborated. That the scientific explanation of their effectiveness is not yet entirely clear, may be admitted without destroying the empiric proof. It was not until 1882 that science could demonstrate why Peruvian bark cures malaria, yet the healing power of the wood has existed since its appearance on earth. There are many other things in empiric medicine still unsolved; and if the value of the prohibition of blood, for instance, is not demonstrable to-day, we have at least inklings of it that may rise to demonstration in the near future. Meanwhile, Jews and others may benefit by the traditional rules of kashrut, even as the Countess of Chincon did by the Indians' traditional remedy for ague, without explanation. What is needed is enlargement of the *bedika* on modern scientific lines, and a somewhat stricter supervision.

DR. NEUBURGER⁴ has industriously and intelligently collated all the references to medical and allied topics in the extant

⁴ *Die Medizin im Flavius Josephus*. Von Dr. med. et phil. MAX NEUBURGER, O. O. Professor an der Universität in Wien. Bad Reichenhall: 'BUCHKUNST' DRUCK- UND VERLAGSGESELLSCHAFT m. b. H., 1919. pp. 74.

writings of Josephus and compared or contrasted these with the parallel passages in Bible or Talmud. While he points out verbal or material discrepancies between Josephus and the source-texts, he has no theory to propose or uphold; he has simply gathered and classified the material and put it in a form easy to understand and convenient for reference. There are two main divisions of the work, entitled respectively 'Medizinisches aus dem Zeitalter der Bibel' ('Parallelen und Divergenzen'), and 'Medizinisches aus der nachbiblischen Zeit'. The latter includes a brief but interesting excursus on the Essenes. The author adopts the etymology מְדִינָא for the title of the sect, and attributes to them serious study of the remedial properties of plants and minerals, as well as mystic practices and faith healing. There are many other interesting sections, among which may be cited those upon 'The Pathologic Tendencies of the Asmoneans and the Herodeans'; 'The Status of Pharmacologic Knowledge'; 'Magical Healing'; 'Medicinal Springs'; 'Mosaic Hygiene, personal, and social'; 'Psychotherapy'. Finally, there is a brief discussion of 'medical allusions in the writings of Josephus'—as, for example, his comparison of political disturbances with inflammations and fevers, and his likening of the spread of fanatical ideas to that of pestilence. Dr. Neuburger's style is clear and his language (for a German book, especially) remarkably simple. He has done a good and useful piece of work, for which he deserves many thanks.

SPINOZA⁵ is shown by the author to have studied anatomy and physiology as well as optics, and to have been in many respects in advance of the time on these subjects. The influence of his physiological knowledge in leading him to oppose Descartes' theory of the localism of the soul in the pineal gland (to put it more crudely than accurately) and the part which his studies of Jewish sources—Mishna, Kabbala, and the Judeo-Arabic philosophers and physicians—took in the final shaping of his philosophy, are well brought out. Incidentally to a discussion of his relations

⁵ *Spinoza en de Geneeskunde*. By MOZES HERMAN COHEN. Amsterdam: Bussy, 1920. pp. xi + 74.

with the English anatomist Glisson and with Leibnitz, the author seems to insist that Kabbalism, despite Spinoza's ridicule of Kabbalists, affected him profoundly, as did also Philo and the Neo-Platonists. It is interesting to note that Leibnitz addresses Spinoza as: *Médecin très célèbre et philosophe très profond à Amsterdam* (page 13).

The argument turns on the conception of the soul, and the relation of the human body to the spirit—it is thus, in a measure, biologic. Indeed, it is biology, not medicine, that interested Spinoza and forms the theme of this book.

The parallels between Maimonides and Spinoza show at least attentive reading by the latter, of the former.

Especially interesting is the account of seventeenth-century Jewish physicians in the Netherlands (pp. 37-51); with incidental criticism of the inadequacy of the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* on this and like topics. The author shows an excellent knowledge of the history of the Jews in the Netherlands, and his work is full of valuable allusions and references.

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